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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [RS](#) [SOCI](#)
SUBJECT: NATIONALIST GROUP MARCHES PEACEFULLY, BUT
EXTREMISM ON RISE IN RUSSIA

REF: MOSCOW 3254

¶1. (SBU) Summary. On December 12, Constitution Day, the Movement Against Illegal Immigration (DPNI) and the Slavic Union held the second "Russian March" in as many months. The peaceful and authorized gathering, attended by approximately 300 supporters under the banner "Support Your Constitution," took place under suspicious circumstances after the death of one DPNI leader and two separate attacks on two others during the previous week. Several demonstrators waved white, yellow, and black tricolor flags and gave Nazi salutes, but none dared shout nationalist slogans considering the overwhelming special police (OMON) presence, a proximate cause for arrest at the last "Russian March" on November 4. The rally fell against the backdrop of an increasing number of hate crimes and judicial procedures against skinhead groups, and government calls for increased surveillance and tolerance. End Summary.

DPNI Leaders Killed, Wounded

¶2. (SBU) On December 12, The Movement Against Illegal Immigration (DPNI) and the Slavic Union held an authorized rally of the "Russian March," the nationalist group co-organized by the two groups in Moscow in June 2008, in central Moscow less than a week after DPNI leadership suffered suspicious casualties. On December 7, DPNI Deputy Director and Security Service Director Ivan Lebedev died in a car accident in Moscow's suburbs, just one night after a vicious attack against DPNI leader Aleksandr Belov. Lebedev's car collided with a cargo van early in the morning of the 7th, killing him and leaving two other DPNI members in the car wounded. Unknown assailants attacked and beat DPNI leader Aleksandr Belov with metal sticks on December 6 in Lyuberts, a Moscow suburb, hospitalizing him with a concussion and several head and face wounds. Belov did not file a lawsuit, perhaps because he already faced two lawsuits for inciting hatred, but promised 10,000 USD to anyone identifying the perpetrators of the attack or its sponsors. Later the same day, an unknown attacker threw a cherry bomb at Belov's brother and DPNI-Moscow Coordinator, Vladimir Basmanov, as he sat in a Moscow internet cafe. Basmanov was not wounded.

¶3. (SBU) The events prompted rumors that DPNI leader Aleksandr Belov would cancel the planned December 12 march and encourage friends to attend Lebedev's funeral, scheduled for the same time. Allied nationalist party Slavic Union's leader Dmitry Demushkin announced on December 9 that activists would march peacefully to the Griboyedov Monument along Clean Ponds (Chisty Prudy) Boulevard, and that they expected no interference from city authorities or the special police (OMON). Demushkin called attention to the slogans activists would use, including "Observe Your Constitution," "Owners of Russia - Citizens, Not Bureaucrats," and "We Demand Freedom of Speech!" and reassured police detachments and city authorities that the rally would be peaceful. On December 12, demonstrators waved white, yellow, and black

tricolor flags and carried a banner reading "Observe Your Constitution," appealing to viewers to allow freedom of speech on Constitution Day.

Rumor Mill: Uncertain Who Attacked Belov

¶4. (SBU) The "Russian March" Organizational Committee responded to the "unprecedented pressure" by posting the message "It does not scare us!" on the DPNI website. However, Basmanov admitted that if the events were a coincidence, it was "a very scary coincidence" and seemed to be either "mysticism, or very thoroughly planned." Demushkin speculated that Belov's attackers owed allegiance to the "Antifa" (Anti-fascists organization), or to someone that works under "Antifa," and expected a similar attack directed against him in the near future. SOVA Center Deputy Director Galina Kozhevnikova believed that the attacks against Belov must have an underlying political cause, but could be connected to Belov's shady business ties. Kozhevnikova also commented on Russian March internal battles, noting that some nationalists are fighting to "clean the ranks." In fact, one faction of the DPNI voted to remove Belov as its leader in a summer party congress, yet the majority still supported his leadership.

Regional Support for DPNI

¶5. (SBU) On December 6, the Nizhy Novgorod regional branch of the DPNI held a picket against ethnic crime, and decried Russian government plans to increase the quota for foreign

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laborers to four million people. Demonstrators carried signs reading "Not Legalization, But Deportation!" as well as "Gastarbeiter -- the Scourge of Russia" and "We are defending our Women and Children." According to the DPNI, the recent rape of a 12-year old Russian girl by attackers from the "Caucasus," and the passive approach by oblast law enforcement agencies to track down those responsible, served as an impetus for the demonstration. The crime drew parallels to the October rape and murder of 15-year old Muscovite Anna Beshnova by an Uzbek migrant, considered by some experts to be the spark to increased ethnic violence in the city.

Russia Forecast? Skinheads To Kill More Minorities

¶6. (SBU) Several acts of extremism over the past month suggested that the wave of violence may continue to worsen. Moscow Police Chief Vladimir Pronin promised to increase patrols in the wake of attacks against ethnic minorities over the past month, including the gruesome murder and beheading of a Tajik migrant worker. Other possible cases included the Moscow murders of an 18-year old Kazakh student, a Tajik warehouse laborer, an Azerbaijani national, and a Ukrainian man over a two-day period. Several experts have attributed violence to aggression against labor migrants. Head of the Committee for Inter-regional Relations and National Policy in the Moscow City Government Mikhail Solomentsev told Moscow Center TV on December 15 that Moscow did not need migrant workers at all, and approved of the federal government's decision to halve quotas for migrant workers. Interior Minister of Kabardino-Balkaria Republic Major General Yuriy Tomchak complained on December 12 about the increase of extremism, xenophobia, and nationalism in Russia, and promised that local authorities would revise methods for combating the problem. According to Tomchak, religious sects and informal youth organizations with radical views have been causing social disturbances, and unified extremist groups are pushing criminals out of the business sector. He also attributed part of the problem to the rise in radical Islam.

¶7. (SBU) Two high-profile court proceedings against skinhead

bands in Russia moved forward in December. On December 15, the Moscow City Court sentenced Artur Reno and Pavel Skachevskiy, organizers of a Moscow skinhead group, to ten years in prison each for 20 murders and 12 attempted murders between August 2006 and October 2007 of citizens of Tajikistan, China, Azerbaijan, and Russia. The jury regarded all members, other than Reno and Skachevskiy, as deserving leniency, sentencing seven members to terms ranging from 6 to 20 years, and fully acquitting two members. The prosecutors attributed the skinhead group's motivation to "influence by the ideas of pre-eminence of ethnic Russians and the inferiority of non-Slavs" and decried the absence of life sentences. On December 10, St. Petersburg authorities completed the investigation into the Borovikov-Voyevodin gang, accused of killing a Nigerian and North Korean in 2003, the ethnic hatred expert Nikolai Girenko in 2004, and a Senegalese man in 2006. The indictment against the 13 defendants, known for propagating neo-Nazi ideology, has been forwarded to court. In a reference to the court case, Putin addressed the seriousness of extremism on December 4, saying that "Russia will remain a great nation if all its people, including even small ethnic groups, feel at home."

Ethnic Violence Moves Into Schools

18. (SBU) Moscow's law enforcement agencies have grown more concerned about the rise in interethnic conflicts in higher education institutes in November and December. The murder of 18-year old North Ossetian Oleg Chertikrev at Moscow Pedagogical State University prompted intense scrutiny of an already recognized problem. Police have documented several attacks between Georgians and Dagestanis, Azerbaijanis and Armenians, Vietnamese and Chinese, and other ethnicities. The Moscow Investigations Directorate of the Russian Prosecutor General's Office also launched a probe to determine the online publisher of an extremist book called the "Manual on Street Terror," suspected of encouraging ethnic attacks among different youth groups. Police in Moscow detained more than 500 youth suspected of extremism in 2008, and the number of criminal cases opened under Article 280 (public calls for extremism) and Article 282 (inciting of hate or strife) doubled from 2007 to 60, according to Pronin. Moscow Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov urged police and public organizations on December 17 to work together to "neutralize any extremist rallies" in the coming year.

Comment

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19. (U) Inherent racism in Russia continues to manifest itself in unsavory ways, and increased police patrols and government admonishment promise to only slow the problem. Government suspicion of civil society development programs and law enforcement sympathy with nationalist activities bodes poorly for positive results in the near future. As police crack down on obvious, organized targets like the DPNI, nationalist groups will move further underground and may unite with more extremist elements, making arrests and public confrontation of the problem more difficult.

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